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The First Bathing of One Another: Near Eden; Spring Messianic in a Winter Storm

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The First Bathing of One Another: Near Eden

We have everything we need—essence
of honeysuckle in opal glass jars,
drams of liquid lily pearls, baskets of dried
apple leaves, lilac soaps, each shaped
with a single thumbprint, cylinders
of wet patchouli soaps slick as fishes.
We have stoneware pitchers and wooden
pails filled with spring water taken
from fern-bordered pools with the last
dark stars of morning.

So, open in the open forest, let's bathe.
I'll soap you first, in circling circles,
all the way up and all the way down,
and you lather me, your hands moving
like easy laughter, in and out.

And then we'll rinse—one pitcher wash
over your head, one over mine, your shout,
my moan, our eyes closed tight with cold,
wet slickers of sun across our faces,
a deluge off our backs, a drench
to our bellies, water flying like jewels
of fire in the expanding dawn, white soap-
froth flowing in streams all around
and through our nakedness to our feet.

Shivering, we'll dry one another then
on beds of oak moss with towels of sweet
grasses, smaller cloths of cotton grasses
for the creases of ears, of toes, of softer
places. Lying back on pillows of scarlet sage,
we'll turn on our stomachs for one another.

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For sky-clean teeth and tongue, you bite
mint, chew dahlias; I'll lick primrose, suck
lotus, the high, clear weather of your mouth
breathing once or twice into mine.

And here are marble bowls side by side
filled with cocoa butters and gold jasmine
creams to be smoothed by finger-scoops
right here along the ridges of the ribs
and here farther down, an ease of each
carefully in to warm and expose.

See, like snow, these fine granules
of gardenia powder in crystal shakers
to sprinkle last into those still damp,
close lines and tight joinings.

O there will be daughters rising
straight out of this surge and spill
and ceremony of blossoming foribunda—
I'm certain—sons emerging right
out of this liturgy, this propelling
immersion and mingling carols of rain.

So. . .let's bathe together, you me,
me you, and thus become known,
and thus loved, thus holy,
thus redeemed.

Spring Messianic in a Winter Storm

Beyond the rims and crevices
and stopped ledges of frigid
rock, beyond boles and black
burrows, all closed and corked
by snows and zeros, past omens
of grey sedges pressed beneath
blowing, battering dusts of ice—
what was it I saw in the distance,
something barely there against
those high, vast bleakages
of weather, a mere suggestion
of vision fluctuating before
the falling over, the white
loss of the plains?

What was it? nothing the eye
could truly catch—one blue leap
of match in the icy wind, one faltering
crimson flume of spark under snow,
a false igniting, a mis-struck
flare, a rip of hurried flag,
a failed signal.

Only much later in my sleep,
did the sound of it finally arrive,
coming as a brief turn of stringed
waltz in a smattering of unstrung
chords, a partial measure of polka
plunked on an ancient Pianola, one simmer
of bold jazzy cymbal, one redhot blare
of brass wavering off-key, fading,
snuffed out, vanished, as missing
from the midnight as the dawn.